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Part 1

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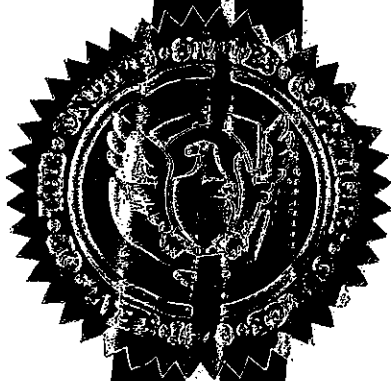
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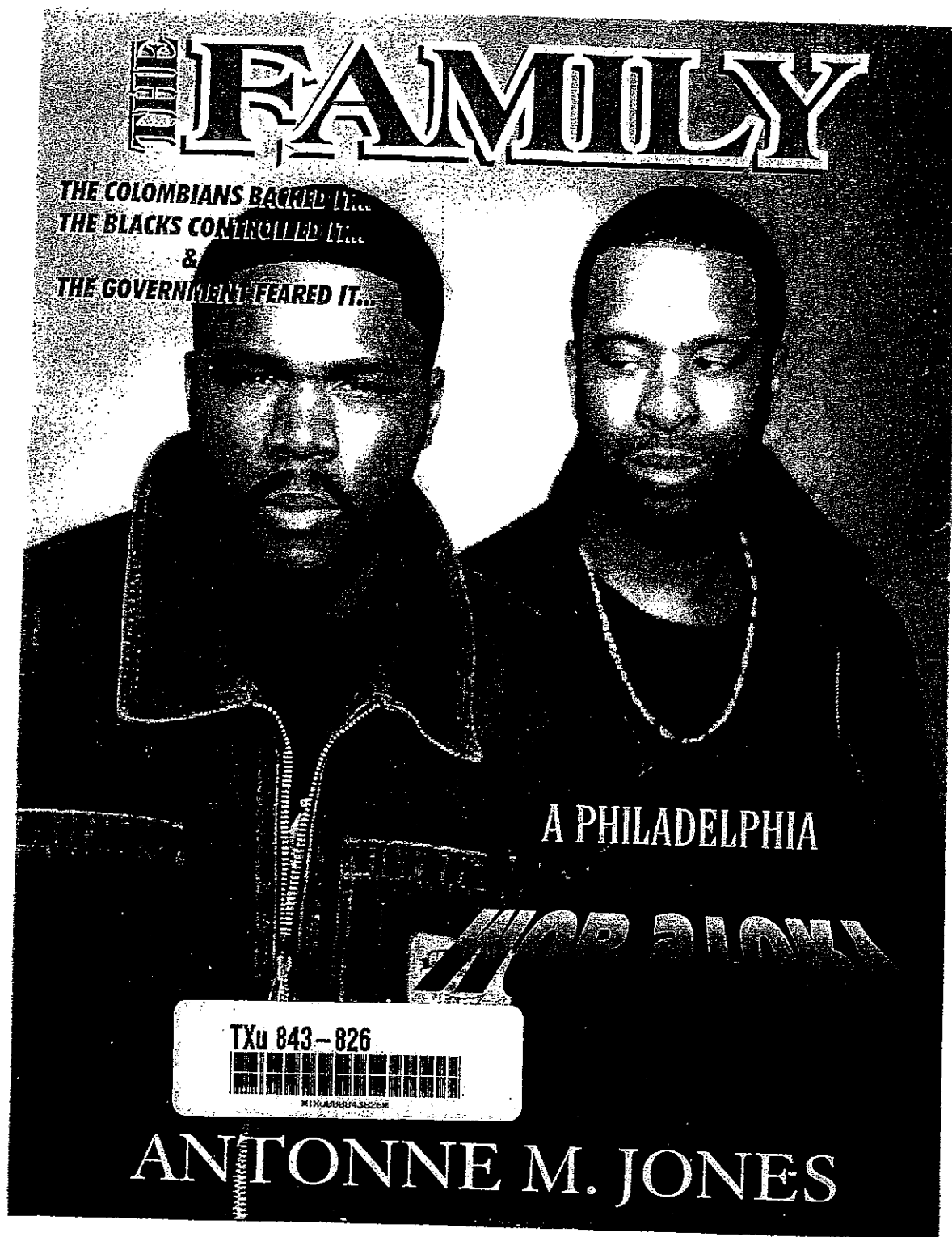
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To Lakita, Hey baby! How have you and the children been doing? I had just started writing this letter because you and the kids have been on my mind all day. Earlier in the day, I had cafeteria duty in the chow hall and when I was finished cleaning up I was mad tired so I took a nap for a couple hours before I started writing. Boo, I want to apologize to you for all of the wrong and hurtful things I have done to you in the past. Now I realize that you have always been the only person to stand by my side through the thick and the thin, but for some unexplainable reason it seems as though I have treated you the worst. Baby, I wish that I could go back and turn the hands of time back. But I can't. If I could I would do so many things different. For starters, I would have never chosen the kind of lifestyle that I have lived. In choosing that kind of life ~~I made~~^{was} the biggest mistake that I have ever made. Lakita, I cry almost every night since I've been in here because this was not the way that I had our lives planned. I can now clearly see that my promiscuous and irrational ways destroyed everything that we had worked towards. Remembering how you would beg me to slow down and threaten to leave me, hoping that I would change my ways, only leaves me feeling that much more of a fool for not taking heed to your advice. Which in turn has gotten me in the predicament that I am currently in. It may seem as though that it's too late to be telling you that I am sorry, but I have never gotten around to doing so in the past. I want you to go on with your life and to try to find a good man that is going to treat you and the children appropriately. I feel so less of a man by telling you to have some other man treat my children better than I can. At times, I seriously contem-

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plate committing suicide, but the only thing that keeps me going, is the hope of one day being together with my loved ones. All that I have left in here is despair and wishful thinking. So please continue to stand by me. In these critical times I need you more now than I have ever since we've been together. You are all that I have.

I Love You. Anthony.

This was my third letter to my wife since I have been in here and it was only my third week in this hell-hole. For the first two weeks in this maximum security prison, every morning I woke up wishing that all of this shit was just a dream. But with all of these bells ringing and the screams of a man dying because he was just shanked in the back of his head with a homemade dagger, had made me quickly realize that this was no fucking dream. I am sitting in my cell trying to remember when all of this started.

The beginning of the end of my life, is what I called it. It began in the year of nineteen eighty five, as I was preparing to graduate from highschool. It seemed as though graduation day would never come because instead of the usual twelve years of school needed to graduate it took me an additional one year to do so. That was due to the fact that I had fucked around one year by cutting classes and missing assignments. I did not have any definite plans in which direction my future was headed, but I was for certain that my plans would unquestionably be significantly different than those of the remaining class. Most of my classmates often talked about either going away to college or venturing in to the workforce. Neither one of these viewpoints struck my interest. I wanted more out of life. Some pizzaz!

Growing up in South Philadelphia in the early seventies, meant that I had been exposed to the Italian Mafia, Black Incorporate, the Jamaican posses and even the newly Cambodian crip macks, originally from California. I can clearly remember the day when the infamous Angelo Bruno was gunned down in front of his home. That evening, it must have been every newstation in the country covering that story. Strangely, I was forever amused when I read or heard about the Italian mafiosi wars. I was not allowed to watch such movies because I had two very strict parents who monitored my every childhood actions.

My father was a truck driver who drove cross country for an Iranian marble company. If he would be home two days of the week meant that it would be an unusual week because he was one of the company's better drivers, which in turn confined him to the road. Although he was on the road for a substantial amount of time he would routinely send money to my mother for our clothing and the bills. It was not a significant amount of money but it was enough to subsidize the bills and keep my tuition in tact. Despite the fact that he financially maintained the family his presence around the house was very much needed at times. It is my belief that his absence from the homefront made a considerable difference in my life and attributes to the predicament that I am currently enduring. In retrospect, my fathers virtual nonexistence was supplemented with the love of my complaisant mother. Everyone in the neighborhood addressed her as "mother Marge", because of the respect she commanded along with the motherly persona she upheld to the neighborhood children.

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My mother was employed as a legal secretary at a downtown law firm in which she worked for eleven years. She was making good money because of her profession, and combining that with my father's income made it possible for me to attend Catholic school for twelve years. I resented going to parochial schools, wearing the same white shirt, the corresponding plaid tie, and the immutable navy blue pants day after day. The majority of children in the neighborhood went to public school and appeared to be having more fun than I was especially because they were allowed to do pretty much what they wanted to do by their teachers. The most significant issue was that they were able to wear every day clothing, as well as sneakers. My mother would often explicate the distinction of being different from the norm and had frequently complimented me for looking admirable and being mild mannered. To this day I am whole-heartedly convinced that her foremost purpose for sending me to Catholic school was for the discipline I was receiving, which ultimately would paint a brighter future for myself. Later on in my adolescent years I looked down upon those who hooked school or were getting involved with drugs.

In contrast, my best friend was one of the kids from the neighborhood that parents had banned their children from playing with. His name was Mark, an unusual kid living under immense extraordinary circumstances. His father was a Vietnam veteran suffering from quadriplegia. His paralysis

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was sustained from the hideous bloodshed in the country of Laos during the war. In addition to returning home wheelchair bound, he had also returned a heroine addict. His last tour of duty was six months after Marks' birth, leaving his mother alone with three children. She was a good woman, but I surmise with her husband being in combat in Southeast Asia and pondering the idea of him never making it back to the states began taking its toll on her mentally. Sadly, that is probably the most logical explanation of her also getting strung out on drugs. As her addiction worsened as so did the condition of the house that they lived in. All of the utilities had been shut off and the building had become rat infested. All of these calamities occurring in such a short amount of time, resulted in his mother calling it quits and leaving the kids in the care of the State Department of Human Services. Luckily for Mark, his maternal grandparents agreed to become his legal guardians and allowed him to reside in their two-story row home. Unfortunately, his siblings remained in the custody of the state. With having two drug addicted parents and the situation being as so, with Mark's brother and sister being separated from one another, had made him a dejected youth usually being alone.

Our back yard was adjacent to his grandparents' and occasionally I would see him sitting on the steps playing with a make pretend friend. One Saturday afternoon as I was playing basketball in the yard, I noticed him glumly staring at me from a window

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in the back of his house. Waving in his direction I gestured for him to come over to my yard and shoot around with me. When I did that I could only notice the immense grin on his face and before I could blink he had already climbed the fence and was in my yard. From that day on a sincere friendship was inevitably established. The relationship that Mark and I shared resembled that of two long lost brothers who were reunited after many years. Many of the other kids were not as fond of him as I was partly because they deemed him as being a nerd. His clothing was outdated because they were being chosen by his grandfather, who had no sense of what style clothing was being worn amongst our peers. He often became the butts of many jokes compliments of the neighborhood bully named J.T. He recieved this nickname which stood for "just talk" because that is all he ever did. Being much bigger than most of us, no one dared to retaliate against him , or even speak up for themselves when he started busting. Basically, he was nothing more than an asshole whose bark was bigger than his bite.

Despite what others thought of Mark he was my new best friend, and besides I was a nerd myself and did not have a considerable magnitude of friends either. After school we'd usually play football or watch movies resulting in a fist fight afterwards in which we would make up by the next day. During the weekends, the two of us would walk to the shopping center to pack the groceries of customers in their cars for loose change. Typically, the standard tip was in the neighborhood of twenty five

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cents per customer, but occasionally we would encounter a generous shopper who tipped as much as a dollar. By mid afternoon, the twenty minute walk home included a cessation at the grocery store to purchase sugar cookies and several cans of R.C. cola's in preparation for the kung-fu movie on channel forty-eight.

We undertook this routine almost every weekend until we were teenagers. Mark and I deemed ourselves as an inseperable team with entrepernarul potential. What I relished about Mark was he had big dreams similar to mine. "Just because we live in the ghetto doesn't mean we have to stay here" is what he would sometimes say. We were joined together at the hip. It did not stop here though, it continued all the way up untill high-school. It was no longer packing groceries anymore. Oh no, it got much deeper than that!

L.H.P. 2

Chapter 2

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"Weed out, Weed out!" Dime bags of Hawaiian grown marijuana had replaced the groceries that we used to pack in the cars of customers at the supermarket. This hustle came to be in the middle of our freshman year in highschool. The difference between packing groceries and hustling weed was instead of us recieving twenty five cents per-customer we were getting ten dollars each transaction. Also, the partnership was no longer just me and Mark, now we had two other friends from school that we had teamed up with named Dante and Shawn. Dante was a short stocky kid who had a complex about his height and ~~his~~ ^{his} weight. He was from the North side of the city whose family had always dealt in drugs and had operated an exclusive numbers operation. He was a good guy but Dante was extremely short tempered and because of this, his attitude had gotten us in a lot of fights when we would go to the clubs. Shawn was a half black ~~half~~ ^{half} Dominican ~~boy~~ who was originally from Uptown Manhattan but whose family had moved to Philadelphia when he was thirteen years old. The "D.A." is what we would sometimes refer to him as because he would listen to a persons conversation and then cross examine the hell out of you to find out if you were sincere and telling the truth in what you were saying. Many times, even if you were telling the truth he would make you feel like a liar anyway. This motherfucker was good! Amongst all of the guys, I had the utmost respect for Shawn more than anyone else because he had always supported anything he had spoke upon with common sense and logic. Having partners like this had made our business much easier to operate, as well as prosper. We had all shared the same concept that none of us was as

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smart as all of us.

At this point , there was not an enormous amount of profit being generated in selling weed because the breakdown was being done by the four of us into equivalent shares. We steadily sold about three to four pounds of weed per week throughout the city and that was only because we were the only blacks who were able to maintain a consistent supply of exotic buds. This connection was set up by me through this Italian kid named Vinny Tartaglia, with whom I had used to work with at the Italian Market on Ninth street. His father, big Vinny, was an alleged capo in the Philadelphia-New Jersey based mafia, who had recieved a life sentence for murder and racketeering charges. Before his conviction he was the main supplier of methamphetamine, cocaine and marijuana that was being imported to the tri-state areas via the waterfronts. So, quite naturally, the business was then handed down to little Vinny. Him and I had always had a candid respect for one another and that was because I was not intimidated by his family's power or their friends or simply because they were in the mob, because in my eyes they were still white boys and that was the bottom line.

Us selling pounds of weed per week was proper but we began growing impatient for faster and more substantial money. Mark had previously mentioned the idea of selling cocaine but at the time of that discussion we did not have a sufficient amount of money to purchase an ample amount of blow which in turn could have been resold on the streets. In the late seventies going in to the early eighties, cocaine was considered to be a rich man's high, ^{so} ~~sa~~ that meant that the cost of it, even on a wholesale rate,

was going to be mad expensive. Besides the soaring prices of the shit, we also did not have a cliental to whom the shit could have been sold to.

Right now, the times were a little different from when we had that first conversation, mainly because we had now made some money and by dealing with an older crowd of weedheads, we had met some of their friends who had happened to do coke as well. Now was a good time to make a move but we still would have to go through Vinny to get a deal because he was the only person that we had known that we could have purchased some weight from. We needed to concoct a plan on how this idea could be carried out, and how we could find an alternate supplier. Make no mistake, Vinny and his boys did not treat us well but in this business, when a supplier realizes that he is your only option, they tend to ante up the prices of shit more than necessary. We had arranged a meeting to be held on a Saturday night preceeding a rap show at the after midnite club in Center City. The meeting was going to be held in the Penns Landing area, which was a tranquil section that bordered the waterfront where many illegal activities were carried out.

AFTER MIDNITE

The after midnite club was a new joint that had featured the hottest disc jockey's and M.C.'s from Philadelphia and New York. Occassionally, there would be other rap groups from Washington D.C. and California that would come to this night spot to perform. This particular evening, on the same night we were scheduled to have our meeting, the club was having the nineteen eighty five high school class salute. The show was going to be for all of the graduating highschool classes for that year. Highlighting

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the show was going to be a new rapper from New York by the name of L.L. Cool J. Prior to this show no-one ever heard of this guy, but from all the talk that was going on, he was supposed to be the shit in New York because he had mad rhyming skills. The club had always featured up and coming artists, but on the same note, on any given weekend, you could still see the Ultra Magnetic M.C.'s Salt n' Pepper or hear two M.C.'s battling such as the legendary Big Daddy Kane verses Jazz Fresh, who was a local Philly legend. The night was off the hook with L.L. Cool J. freestyling over the "It's Yourz" track by Matronix.

The show was not the only memorable event that happened that evening, because it was also the same night that we were going to concoct a scheme on how we were going to produce more abundant capital by substituting the marijuana for cocaine. Superceding the drugs was not the only change we needed, but also our ideology had to be converted, we needed to broaden our horizons so to speak. I had envisioned us as not being classified as a group of thugs selling drugs but rather as a close knit organization adjoined with influential connections. More or less, emulating the Italians. At the meeting the first topic of conversation was what were going to be the designated roles of each one of us in this alliance? Shawn had suggested that the most adequate manner in handling this dilemma was for the four of us to have an equal amount of authority with not one of us having more say so than the other. This designed structure was to maintain the equilibrium amongst four delegators where as our individual ego's would not interfere with the good of our intentions. It took us about two hours of deliberating on how we were

going to distribute the cocaine as well as a methodical way of eliminating our potential competition. As far as the potential competitors were concerned, there were no other organized gangs that we would have to contend with other than the vast expanding Jamaican posses. The script was simple: out do our competition by supplying the demand with a bigger and better quality of cocaine. Our ultimate goal was to eventually have all of the motherfuckers that were dealing coke either working for us or being supplied by us. There were not going to be any exceptions to this rule. "Be good or be gone", was the motto that was later on associated with my team by everyone here in the city. Dante had raised a very good pointin stating that we did not have another connection other than the nexus with Vinny. Mark had then made us aware that he had befriended a kid named June whom he had met while being locked up in a juvenile hall. He said June was a Dominican boy that was from Manhattan's Washington Heights section, who had worked as a mule for some Colombian drug traffickers, whose base of operations was located in the Miami Beach area, but had extended to Philadelphia, New York, Chicago and as far as Los Angeles. June had gotten arrested at the Third street Amtrack station attempting to deliver two hundred and fifty two grams of cocaine, to an informant that had been doing business with his boss, who was from the Spanish part of North Philly. He had spent approximately two years in the lock up facility where he had met my man Mark. Before he had gotten released he had told that when he got out of jail he was going to move to Florida and that if he ever needed anything that he would be there for him.

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June had felt compelled to look out for him because Mark had did the same thing for him during the years that they were institutionalized together. Mark said that he had June's phone number somewhere in the house and that tomorrow he would attempt to look for it. Now, with everything being said, the meeting had been concluded. We had all left the meeting with an assured vote of confidence that what we were planning to undertake, could in fact work out, as long as everyone stuck to the game plan.

Two days later Mark had found the telephone number and had informed us to meet him at his house at the time he was going to make the phone call. The next day when I had reached his home, he had told me that Shawn and Dante had bumped into an old acquaintance named Maurice, who was from North Carolina, he had just arrived in town trying to sell a couple of guns that he had bought from down South. He had told them that he had mad connections for some autiliary in Raleigh, and if we had wanted a thourough hook up on some gats, that it could be arranged by him. The Carolina's have always been known for inexpensive tooley's that were just as easy to purchase in a gun store as it was to get one on the streets. It just so happened that at this particular stage in our plans, guns were going to be a must, considering the shit that we were set to begin. So Shawn and Dante took the eight hour trip down South in search of a good deal on some heaters. In the mean time, Mark had called June's crib but had only received an answering machine with June's voice on it. He had left his name and phone number on the answering service and a message to June for him to contact him as soon as possible.

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While awaiting June's returned phone call, Mark and I had drove to Russel street to pick up a cupple bags of killer and then headed to the Plateau. As we listened to D.J. Cosmic Kev and Jazzy Jeff battling on the turntables Mark had expressed his feelings towards me and had reminded me of how I had been such a good friend to him since he had moved into the neighborhood. He had also spoke of his fucked up childhood and how if what we were putting together worked out, that it could make him feel like a normal person. I knew exactly what he was getting at, because with him and I growing up together, I had witnessed alot of the bullshit that he had gone through and by making money he figured he would be accepted by others. It is said that money can't buy happiness, but it damn sure can help! Consequently, after he stated what was on his mind, I had reminded him that even though we were a team composed of four people, that it was mainly up to me and him to step up and be the big dogs of this shit. It was my belief that we would have to rule with an iron fist and make those that were around us to conceive issues on the same parallel in which we did. That concept was based on the theory that states 'when you control a mans thinking, you do not have to worry about his actions'.

We had kicked it for a little while longer before returning to Mark's house too see if June had called. As we reached the front of Mark's door his answering machine could be heard recording a message. By the time he had stopped fiddling wiith his key, trying to open the lock with his jammed key the message had ended. Once we had gotten in the house Mark rewinded the tape and played the message: "Mark what's up bro? This is June. I'm returning your

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phone call that I recieved earlier today. I'm going to be in Fort Lauderdale for all of the day tomorrow so you can give me a call at area code nine-five-four-five-five-five-two-seven-eight-one. Peace." That was the phone call we had been waiting for all day. But we decided that we would call June back the next day when Shawn and Dante were supposed to be back from Raleigh. They had returned the next morning at about ten o'clock, with terrific news. The long trip was well worth it because they were able to purchase three Ruger made nine millimeter hand guns, a rare Russian made glock forty five, and two a.k. forty sevens with banana clips, all for the low price of twelve hundred dollars. Up North, these same guns could have cost us about thirty five hundred dollars. We had informed them of the returned phone call from June and that we were going to give him a call in the early afternoon. Shawn advised us that it would be more prudent to place the phone call at a pay phone as opposed to calling from the house. That was just in case either of our phone lines were tapped. As Mark placed the phone call at the phone booth on the corner of his block, we had stood on the opposite side of the street talking to some girls from the neighborhood named Trish and Lakita. Lakita was a girl that I had been trying to get with for years, but she had always been the type of female who was more into her books than she was in to boys. Me and her had tallked for a while before her father had driven up and made her get in the car. Her pop did not like her talking to the neighborhood guys because he felt as though we weren't about shit and that his daughter undoubtedly deserved better. I had glanced across the street noticing that Mark had engaged in an intricate conversation with whomever he was on

the phone with. The conversation had went on for about fifteen more minutes before him hanging up the phone and proceeding to walk across the street. "Who is the man , motherfuckers?" he jokingly said. "Man fuck all that" Dante frowningly responded with. What did June say Mark? He said that he was running mad shit in the Dade and Broward counties, and if we came to Florida to get with him, he will personally see to it that we would be taken care of. June sounded ~~like he was shining~~ like he was shining like a real big boy, Mark said while rolling up some weed. We had decided that Mark and I where going to fly to Miami while Shawn and Dante remained in Philly until they ~~had~~ recieved word from us to Western Union ~~as~~ the money. Everything was going as planned. From this period on I had referred to it as the 'Philadelphia Renaissance Era' because it ~~had~~ seemed as though everyone was shining. Partly because selling drugs had become the most popular way to make a living amongst the urban young. There was no difference between us and ~~the~~ other drug dealers in the city. We were all hustler on the same journey, my team just had better road maps.

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I had woken up at six thirty in the morning to begin packing my clothes for our scheduled trip to Florida to meet with June. Lakita had made the reservations for us^And had paid for the airline tickets on her credit card. She and I had secretly began seeing each other without her parents awareness for about a month. She would lie to her folks by telling them that she was spending the night over her girlfriend ~~Dellia~~^{DELIA}'s house just so she could be with me. My feelings for Lakita had now grown deeper as so did my trust for her. She was not the flyest girl in the neighborhood, or even the prettiest for that matter, but she was mine and had become my best friend as well. Many^Anights we would sit in the park holding hands, reminiscing about when we were little kids and how we were going to make alot of money, and then move down South. She had just graduated high school and planned on attending Norfolk State University in Virginia, but I had convinced her to stay here with me and go to school the following semester. It was selfish of me to procrastinate her ambitions, but like most drug dealers I thought my aspirations of ghetto glory were more significant.

Initially, Lakita was in total disagreement with me going to Florida, but she had a change of heart once she had realized that this venture was not just about my personal well being, but rather a step closer to a brighter future for both of us. While driving to the airport I stopped at a nearby florist and purchased a dozen of black roses and had then delivered to her job. Our flight ~~had~~ de-

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parted from Philadelphia promptly at eleven thirty in the morning and had landed in Miami at two o'clock in the afternoon. By this time the temperature had already reached the upper nineties and with the humidity factor it ~~had~~ made it feel as though it was in the hundreds. We were not able to rent a car because you had to be twenty-five years ^{OR ABOVE} ~~old~~ with a major credit card, so we flagged down a ^{TAXI} ~~cab~~ and instructed him to drive us to the downtown Miami Beach area, where we could find a hotel to stay in. Mark and I had noticed ~~that~~ while driving through the Miami Beach area that there was a heavy influence of Spaniards and West Indians through out the city. Back in Philly we were mainly exposed only to Puerto Ricans and a handful of Jamaicans. But Miami appeared to be a melting pot of diverse culture along the east coast. We had rented a hotel room located on Collins Avenue that had cost twenty-five dollars per night, and was furnished with a stove, television, and two beds. Mark had suggested that we spend the rest of the day relaxing and ~~that~~ we give his friend June a call in the early afternoon of the next day. The rest of the day ^{WAS} ~~we~~ spent on the beach smoking weed, and tripping off all of the olive skinned Latin women that were switching their cute little asses around in thongs.

Later ~~on~~ that evening the weather had changed and became moderate with a stirring breeze, so I ^{ADDITIONAL} ~~headed back~~ ^{RETURNED} to the hotel ^{to get a} ~~to get a~~ light sweatshirt and a pair of jeans. Meanwhile, Mark had remained at an outdoor beach restaurant talking with a ^{WEST} ~~West~~ TRIDADIAN ^{WOMAN} ~~ladie~~ girl ~~that~~ ^{with} he had met earlier in the day. While

changing my clothes I had began to think of Lakita and how much I already missed her. So I decided to call her before leaving the room to head back and meet Mark. Ironically, when I called her she had told me that she was just thinking about me, and that she had waited in the house all day ~~awaiting~~ ^{for} my phone call. "Why did it take you all of the day to call me, baby" she questioned. Because Mark and I were on the beach for a little while swimming, I laughingly replied. "Yeah, I bet nigga", she replied sarcastically. "You and Mark were probably on the beach looking at other bitches!". Lakita was becoming increasingly jealous with me, but I honestly did not mind because I had become the same way with her as well. She had pleaded with me not to go outside and to stay on the phone with her for a little while longer. I had agreed to do so but only if she would talk dirty to me and express ~~to~~ ~~me~~ how much she missed me. Moments before we were about to hang up she had promised that we were going to make love for the first time upon me arriving back home. She had really caught me off guard when she began telling me of her impetuous desires, because I had wrongfully assumed the intimate aspect of our relationship was going to be procrastinated because of her being a virgin. She had begun detailing what our passionate evening was going to consist of doing but before she was able to conclude with her passionate chimera the twisting of the doorknob could be heard then Mark entered the room. So I told Lakita that I would call her tomorrow in the early afternoon.

Up the next morning our day began with a continental breakfast at a fancy hotel on the boardwalk.

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After breakfast we devised our detail in which manner we were going to contrive our proposition with June. By the time we had completed eating our breakfast the afternoon was nearing. The meeting with June was scheduled at one o'clock in the afternoon, so that meant we had an hour to waste before our confabulation. To kill sometime Mark and I walked along side the beach trudging through the sand collecting sea shells and admiring the beautiful ladies tanning. About twelve forty five we left the beach and flagged down a cab ~~TAXI~~ and instructed him to drive us to the Biscayne Bridge where June had instructed us to meet him at one o'clock sharp. Upon reaching our destination June was accompanied by three other older hispanic men. Que pasa June said as he reached out to shake Marks hand. Long time no see, he followed up with. ~~I'm~~ ~~alright he answered.~~ This is my friend Ant, Mark said as he formally introduced me. These our my three bosses, June replied ~~as he began naming them.~~ This is ~~Manuelo, this is Angelo, and this is Don Delgado~~ guys, ~~June said while pointing.~~ They do not speak ~~any~~ English, June said while pointing, but I will translate our conversation for them, and besides I have already told them about you guys coming to Florida, ~~anyway.~~ I began to feel slightly uncomfortable becausee the older men just stared at us without uttering a word while June and Mark began speaking. June, this is the deal Mark voiced as he began walking away from the men. Me and several of my boys are attempting to organize a massive drug ring back in Philly and to do so we would need an out of state, reasonable cocaine connection. And that is why we are attempting to link up

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with you and your boys. You came to the right source said June while draping his arms around Marks neck. How much money are you guys working with, he questioned? Fifteen thousand dollars, Mark quickly responded. You know bro, prices here in Florida are much cheaper than they are up North, June uttered. No shit sherlock, Mark sarcastically replied. Well, let me talk it over with my bosses and see if I could possibly get ~~you~~ a better deal then the ~~best~~ ^{NORTH} prices. Hold on for a minute.

June flagged the men as to come here and the four of them began speaking Spanish. The conversation lasted for about five minutes beffore June returned to us. My bosses said since you guys are friends of mine, they agreed to give you two kilos for the fifteen thousand dollars and you guys owe us an additional five thousand dollars on the next deal. Mark and I both stared at each other in a state of disbelief because we could not believe what we just heard. You are going to give us two keys, for fifteen thousand and we owe you five thousand dollars Mark reiterated? Yeah, Mark that is the best ^{build} that we can do right now. But as time goes on and we build a level of trust, who knows what could happen, June assured him. That's a bet Mark responded. We are going to need at least a couple of hours before we can give you the money because it is going to be Western Unioned, he added. That's cool he replied. Give me the adress of your hotel and I will have the material delivered to you as early as ten o'clock in the morning.

As Mark and I drove back to the hotel in the taxi cab we discussed the advantages of the agreeent that was

rendered by June and his bosses. Ant, do you realize that we are getting keyloads for ten thousand dollars a piece? Mark emphatically questioned. That is half of the price they are selling for up North, kid. And plus the quality of the shit is probably close to ninety percent pure compared to the bull shit that is being cut up and resold by the degos in Philly. I was so overwhelmed by how unerring our negotiations had gone I was left awestruck. The only thought that could be conceived at the time was that of money. Before reaching the hotel we stopped at the Western Union office which was a couple of blocks from our hotel to contact Shawn and Dante to detail them the aspects of our deal and for them to send the money. The rest of the day was spent shopping at clothing stores, and later on in the evening we visited Luke's, a slamming ass club which was owned by the rapper. Despite all of the half dressed women that were in the joint I could not really enjoy myself because I was thinking of my baby Lakita who had remained in Philly waiting me to come back. We left the club at about four o'clock in the morning with Mark bringing ~~the~~ beautiful Panamenian girl he had ~~met~~ ^{met} back to the room. Before going to sleep I called Lakita to only receive an answering machine because she probably had already gone to sleep.

The next morning we were awoken by the phone ringing in which the operator at the front desk had informed us that we had two guests waiting in the lobby of the hotel. Mark instructed her to direct them to our room. June arrived with two beautiful hispanic girls and a large Eddie Bauer traveling bag containing neatly wrapped squared bricks of cocaine. As June and Mark

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talked, me and the two women began counting the money. Looking on the outside of the two neatly wrapped bricks, shiny fish like scales could be seen shinning through the clear plastic. Everything went as planned with the deal ending in a handshake, as the three exited the room. Mark instructed me to contact Greyhound to find out the schedule for departing buses arriving in Philadelphia. The earliest bus leaving from Miami and arriving in Philly was scheduled to leave at seven o'clock in the morning. We packed our belongings and prepared for our departure. Traveling on the bus was doomed to be very uncomfortable, and time consuming. But in retrospect it was safe and that was most important. Arriving at the bus terminal our suitcases were placed in the undercarriage of the bus with the drugs being placed in the overhead on the bus. Mark sat in the front ^{of the bus} and I ^{settled} sat in the ^{back} of the bus. The travel time was for twenty nine hours with one layover in Fayetteville North Carolina. I reclined in the uncomfortable seat with my walkman, listening to the Street Beat tape ~~by the way~~ and prepared for the long ride home.

UNPLEY

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Last stop, Philadelphia, hollered the red-eyed bus driver. The twenty nine hour commute back to the city had finally come to an end with Dante and Shawn awaiting our return at the terminal. Despite travel time our method of transporting proved to be effective as well as safe. An old time gangster who we only knew as Sam previously advised us that the more local you maintain interstate transportation, the less likely you were to get jammed. Due to the lack of communication by the local and federal authorities made it almost impossible to keep ^{track} of potential ^{traffickers} traffickers. Shawn rented a hotel suite near the airport so we could break down the coke and prudently outline a distribution plan. Since we had two kilos and owed June five grand, Mark wisely suggested that at least one of the kilos be sold entirely in the lowest denominations. Which was twenty dollar bags. Uncut. This would ensure a significant profit, an expeditious payment of our tab, and superior quality of material for our clientele. As for the other brick, that would be sold in measures of weights such as quarter ounces, halves, and quarter pounds. Predicting an enormous amount of attention by other dealers, as a result of us selling uncut twenties, one could rightfully assume that jealousy would become an inevitable demeanor. So, by wholesaling weight to competition was a clever method of regulating their business and a tactic to maintain the peace. Mark and I began breaking the first brick in to twenties while Shawn and Dante weighed the other by seven grams per baggie. From the kilo that was being bagged as twenties we netted fifty ~~for~~ ^{for} thousand dollars, on account of each one of the

thirty six ounces grossing fifteen hundred dollars a piece. And from the kilo , by selling to other dealers at a six-hundred dollars per ounce wholesale price, generated an additional twentyone thousand and six hundred dollars. The total gross amounted to be seventy-five thousand and six hundred dollars, which was not bad for a twenty thousand dollar investment. Incidentally, the wholesale price of ounces here in the city ranged from eight hundred to twelve hundred dollars. So that meant we would be cutting other costs by as much as fifty percent. Which in turn would undoubtedly raise the eyebrows of any dealer who wanted to stay in business. The greuling process of bagging all of this shit took well over twelve hours, so we decided to keep the room for an additional day.

Before calling it quit for the night I phoned Lakita to notify heer that I was back in town. She had a fit because I had not called her in almost two days. Without giving much thouoght to her feelings, by forgetting to call, should have been a subliminal indication that our lifestyle had begun to change without notice. Her fussing would never last long, because whenever I would get myself in a jam I would make her laugh to pacify the situation. You know you can't stay mad at someone who makes you laugh. Before we hung up the telephone she told me that her pussy was throbbing and the juices from her lips were now seeping through her scanty lace panties that she was wearing. By listening to her verbal orgasm I developed an erection myself, and suggested we get a hotel room for the weekend. She enthusiastically agreed. Having my lady in my corner, Dante, Shawn, and Mark on